DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 645 RC 016 444

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| TITLE | Count Me In: Youth 2000. United National Indian Tribal Youth. |
| INSTITUTION | National Congress of American Indians, Washington, D.C.; Office of Human Development Services (DHHS), Washington, D.C. |
| PUB DATE | 87 |
| NOTE | 21p. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Descriptive (141) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | American Indian Culture; *American Indian Education; *American Indians; Change Strategies; Conferences; Cooperative Programs; Demography; Employment Opportunities; Family Role; *Futures (of Society); Labor Force; *Leadership Responsibility; Leadership Training; Minority Group Influences; Program Descriptions; Public Relations; School Role; *Self Determination; Self Esteem; Tribes; *Youth; Youth Problems; Youth Programs |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Youth 2000 |

ABSTRACT

Youth 2000 is a nationwide "call to action" between now and the year 2000 to enlist all sectors of society in helping vulnerable youth achieve social and economic self-sufficiency and to fulfill their potential as viable, contributing members of American society. Specific goals of the campaign are employment and economic self-sufficiency, improved literacy and educational attainment, reduction in the incidence of teenage pregnancy, lifestyles free from substance abuse, and reduction in violent and accidental injuries and deaths. Youth 2000 will not require new federal legislation but will instead be carried out using existing legislative authorities and resources. The federal role will be that of catalyst and partner. Youth 2000 is not a single, officially approved program model; instead, it encompasses a wide variety of approaches that build on the needs and strengths of individuals, communities and families, tribal goals, and youth concerns. Youth 2000 will involve intensive public information campaigns, national conferences and other meetings to focus tribal leadership on youth issues, and the establishment and expansion of partnerships among federal agencies, foundations, and national Indian youth organizations to promote public and private sector support for American Indian youth. (JHZ)

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Office of Human Development Services

ED287645

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*A national campaign in support of America's Indian youth from now to the year 2000*

RC016444

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This Indian YOUTH 2000 booklet was developed by the National Congress of American Indians and the Intra-Departmental Council of Indian Affairs of the Department of Health and Human Services

1987

Office of Human Development Services
Washington DC 20201

Office of Human Development Services
Intra-Departmental Council on Indian Affairs

**America's youth represent our investment in the future. Today's young people are the parents of tomorrow, our Nation's emerging leaders, and the future leaders of Native American communities. The future strength of our Country and Indian Nations depends on the development and preparation of our youth so that they may enter the 21st century with the vision, energy, determination, and skills necessary to create a new chapter in the evolution of this great Nation. Yet, the future of many of our young people is in jeopardy because of teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, dropping out of school, illiteracy, homicide, suicide, and automobile accidents. Although these problems cut across all social, economic and geographical boundaries, they are particularly acute among American Indian and Alaska Native youth.**

**WHAT IS YOUTH 2000?** YOUTH 2000 is a nationwide "call to action" between now and the year 2000 to enlist all sectors of society in helping vulnerable youth achieve social and economic self-sufficiency, and to fulfill their potential as viable, contributing members of American society. The goals of YOUTH 2000 are:

- Employment and economic self-sufficiency.
- Improved literacy and educational attainment.
- Reduction in the incidence of teenage pregnancy.
- Lifestyles free from substance abuse.
- Reduction in violent and accidental injuries and deaths.

YOUTH 2000 will **NOT** require new federal legislation. The campaign will be carried out using existing legislative authorities and resources.

YOUTH 2000 is **NOT** a highly directive federal initiative. The federal role is of catalyst and partner.

YOUTH 2000 is **NOT** a single, officially approved program model. It encompasses a wide variety of approaches that build on the needs and strengths of individuals, communities and families, tribal goals, and youth concerns.

**"As many tribal leaders have told me, we cannot afford to lose another generation of Indian youth. I want to support a Native American 'grass roots movement' in which the tribes and communities themselves address the problems facing Indian youth and decide how to resolve them."**

William Lynn Engles
Chairman
Intra-Departmental Council on Indian Affairs

## THE CHALLENGE FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH

Indian Nations and America need the productive energies of all the youth to assure continued social and economic progress as we move into the 21st Century. Yet, a high percentage of Indian youth are at risk of not successfully making the transition into productive and responsible adulthood, a risk no one can afford to ignore.

According to the 1980 census, 1.4 million people identified themselves as American Indian. Of this number, 613,200 or 44 percent, are under the age of 20, *nearly one-half of the American Indian population.*

Although other statistics for Indian and Native populations are not readily available or reliable, those that do exist show that poverty, language barriers, and below average education attainment, contribute to more adverse socioeconomic conditions in Indian Country. For example:

- Forty-one percent of reservation Indians live in households with incomes below the poverty level.

- The average unemployment rate on Indian reservations is 58 percent, with some reservations experiencing an 80 to 90 percent jobless rate.

- The 1980 census showed that 45 percent of Indian people 25 years and older had not completed high school.

- Alcoholism deaths for the 15-25 year olds are eight times higher than their non-Indian counterparts.

- Nearly three times as many suicides occur among Indian youth.

- Incarceration of Indian youth is three times that of non-Indian juveniles, with the average arrest involving a 15-17 year old male for an alcohol-related victimless crime.

- Fifty percent of the Indian youth who enter high school will never graduate, and only 42 percent of those who do will go on to complete one year of college.

- More than 25 percent of all Indian children are placed in foster homes, adoptive homes and institutions.

• A 10 year study of Indian youth, begun in 1975 by Colorado State University, found that the heaviest drug and alcohol users come from broken or unstable homes, where youth felt their family lifestyle was less successful in the "Indian way." Other studies show that Indian youth who did not use drugs or alcohol consistently came from homes with strong family sanctions against substance abuse, exhibited a high degree of family-oriented identity, and perceived their families as maintaining traditional values.

The problems facing American Indian youth today are alarming, the issues compelling. Fresh solutions are needed. Taking into account the fact that nearly half of the Indian population is comprised of youth, meeting the challenge of ensuring the social and economic progress for the future of Indian Nations is critical.

**WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY:** Projected demographic shifts between now and the year 2000 will provide a unique opportunity to solve the problem of youth unemployment. By the year 2000, in many parts of the country, there will be a job for every qualified youth who wants one. While this may not hold true in isolated reservation areas, now is the time to look at the opportunities possible and those that can be designed to assist Indian youth.

- In contrast to the explosive growth of young people entering the labor force between 1970 and 1985, the national percentage of young people entering the labor force will drop from 30 percent to 16 percent by the year 2000.

- The number of jobs to be created by the year 2000 will exceed the number of new entrants into the labor force.

- A growing proportion of the young labor force entrants will be minorities. By 1990, one of five entrants will be minority youth.

A window of opportunity that takes into account the unique and acute unemployment situations of Indian youth needs to be addressed by tribal and other leaders, federal, state, and communities, in order to make the gains needed for Indian youth.

**CALL TO ACTION:** It is clear—both on humanitarian grounds and in order to meet the challenge of an increasingly competitive world and national economy—that Indian Nations, communities, and organizations, cannot afford to ignore what is happening to Native American young people. Although the problems are complex, they are solvable. Action is needed to:

- Build a "grass roots movement" involving American Indian and Alaska Native youth, the tribal elders, the private sector, federal, state, local and tribal leaders, voluntary and religious organizations, and all other interested persons willing to work together to support America's future and the future of Indian people.

- Involve Native American young people in understanding the problems facing them and in developing solutions to these problems.

- Build on the strengths of traditional culture and values of the Indian families. Encourage parents to openly communicate with their children, to set goals for their children's development, and to teach their children to set personal goals for themselves.

**LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES:** The Indian YOUTH 2000 campaign is not designed to tell Indian people what to do, but rather to make information available and inform them about the problems so that they may determine where and how they should take action.

The Office of Human Development Services, the Intra-Departmental Council on Indian Affairs, and the Indian Health Service are working to:

- Heighten public awareness about the issues that threaten to prevent millions of young people nationally, and thousands of Indian youth locally, from fulfilling their potential as viable, contributing members of their communities.

- Improve coordination of services and information at all governmental levels for at-risk youth and their families.

- Foster greater involvement and commitment by both the private and public sectors in changing the future education, employment, and employability prospects for at-risk youth.

- Mobilize existing resources and develop tribal, state, and local solutions that build on traditional community and family strengths of Native Americans.

- Encourage the use of comprehensive programs and approaches which address the full range of social, psychological, educational, health and economic problems facing today's Indian youth and their families.

**"We have a unique opportunity between now and the year 2000 to bring about concerted change to serious problems impacting the future of American Indian and Alaska Native youth. The federal government can help facilitate these changes, but real progress will not come about without the active leadership and participation of tribal and community leaders, business leaders, voluntary and religious organizations, families, and most importantly, the Indian youth themselves."**

Jean K. Elder, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary for Human
Development Services-Designate

## THE FIRST AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH 2000 LEADERSHIP ACTIONS

National Tribal Youth Conference The first weekend of May, 1987, the United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. (UNITY), held its 13th annual conference, "YOUTH WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE." More than 300 youth delegates, representing 53 tribes and five Canadian bands, as well as a number of prominent Indian role models, and tribal leaders from a variety of business and other fields, began to address the YOUTH 2000 goals, and the severe problems and situations facing Indian youth and their families. Through their positive leadership approach, the youth culminated the conference in an inspiring and exciting manner, taking the initiative to prioritize for themselves, the most crucial Indian youth problems.

They developed a list of issues and proposed recommendations on how to approach the goals for the year 2000. The results of their analysis, in order of priority, are to address: alcohol, drug and substance abuse; teen suicide; teen pregnancy; the preservation of tribal culture and traditions; communication between Indian youth and tribal government officials; funding for higher education; motivation and self-esteem; school dropout rates; activities for youth; and unemployment.

Presiding over the survey and goal-setting was Arvo Quoetone Mikkanen, a recent Yale Law School graduate, and a member of UNITY's Council of Eagles, who concluded with, "Just as we Indians have a tradition of respecting the wisdom and experience of our elders, we should begin a new tradition of appreciating what our youth have to offer.

"The participants in the UNITY conference have challenged our federal, tribal and organizational leaders to address these issues of concern in order to improve the conditions for all of Indian Country. We anxiously await their response."

The Indian YOUTH 2000 Campaign Starts Rolling The UNITY youth message—undertaking YOUTH 2000 activities which are "youth driven and initiated"—was carried to the annual joint conference of the National Indian School Board Association (NISBA) and the Association of Contract Tribal School Boards.

On May 8, 1987, the Board of Directors for NISBA unanimously voted to adopt the YOUTH 2000 goals, to be carried out in three ways:

—The overall YOUTH 2000 theme will be incorporated into all NISBA-sponsored workshops and conferences.

—NISBA President James Steele sent out a "Call to Action" to NISBA members. This call asks Indian school boards and parent committees to develop and adopt policies that address the concerns identified by the national YOUTH 2000 campaign, but also those identified by the UNITY Indian youth.

—NISBA will work to join forces with other national Indian youth organizations to create awareness, "mobilize" the communities, develop plans, and strategize in the areas of health, education, and employment, which were of particular concern.

National Youth 2000 Kickoff Through the sponsorship of the Office of Human Development Services and the Intra-Departmental Council on Indian Affairs (IDCIA), the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) coordinated the first federal/tribal national American Indian and Alaska Native YOUTH 2000 event in Washington, D.C.

Held on June 17, 1987, the event was part of the first national conference American Indian and Alaska Native Health Promotion: BEYOND SURVIVAL, sponsored by the Indian Health Service, IDCIA, and several national Indian organizations. This event was the first national gathering of tribal leaders, business representatives, federal officials, and Indian youth to promote the Indian YOUTH 2000 campaign.

NCAI hosted a Native Nutrition Fair following the American Indian and Alaska Native YOUTH 2000 program featuring youth performances:

• The WISDOM Dancers from the Phoenix Indian School in Arizona demonstrated how their youth activities are designed as prevention actions to combat the problems faced in their communities. WISDOM stands for WINNEBAGO/IOWA/SHAWNEE/DELAWARE/OTOE-OMAHA/MISSOURIA tribes that the dancers represent.

• The A-C-L Teen Clinic Performers, from the Acoma and Laguna Pueblos and the Canoncito Band of Navajos in New Mexico, performed a skit which depicted their teen clinic experience that resulted in a decline in the incidence of high risk pregnancy and substance abuse.

• The San Juan Youth Group, from San Juan Pueblo in New Mexico, danced their ceremonial dances to demonstrate that their young people stress traditional Indian values as a means for combating substance abuse.

The NCAI Traditional Food Nutrition Fair demonstrated that over 60% of the world's diet is comprised of foods domesticated and harvested by Indian people for thousands of years. Indian people have also given the world about 200 medicines, as well as multiple healing arts.

**"The heart of any nation is the wisdom of its leaders, the hope of its elders and the joy and reverence of its children. Without any one of these elements, a nation is out of balance, as nature would be without any one of its four directions. Leaders and elders teach the children, but it is the passing generation who learn from the children. This circle makes leaders wiser and elders filled with hope for the future. By the year 2000, our youngest children still will be children, unless we make them old before their time. Let us, the guiders, pledge ourselves to the tasks of keeping young in our enthusiam and keeping faith with our YOUTH 2000 goals for the coming generations."**

Suzan Shown Harjo
Executive Director
National Congress of American
Indians

**COUNT ME IN:** Everyone has a role to play in Indian YOUTH 2000. Approaches and strategies will vary to fit the particular situation of Tribes, urban Indian communities, Oklahoma counties, national and professional Indian organizations, and Alaska villages. In some, work is already underway to build partnerships, to remove barriers to effective delivery of services to youth, and to develop creative solutions to a variety of problems. The following are examples of innovative and successful programs:

• At the Isleta Pueblo, located just south of Albuquerque, New Mexico, traditions and innovations blend to promote higher self-esteem of the elders and children. The Intergenerational Program has made an indelible imprint, providing culturally enriched interactions between children and their "chee-ee" (grandmother or surrogate.) The Program links those who are, in years only, poles apart, and corroborates the theory that young children and the elderly need one another.

• The Laguna and Acoma Pueblos, the Canoncito Band of Navajos, the University of New Mexico, Grants School, Indian Health Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs personnel overcame jurisdictional barriers when they recognized the need for a teen health center in their community. The A-C-L Teen Health Center provides general health care, health education, counseling services, and a quarterly newsletter on teen health issues. Three branch clinics have been opened in the nearby pueblos of Bernalillo, Jemez and Espanola.

The project which has noted a reduction in the incidence of teen pregnancy and substance abuse operates the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) which introduces teens to the results of drug abuse through supervised visits to the emergency room at a hearby hospital, a Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) Chapter, videotapes, and a project with a curriculum called "Be Your Own Best Friend."

• The Phoenix Indian High School organized the Indian Students Against Drug Dependency (ISADD) in response to student requests for a group not involved in substance abuse, and one that would promote fellowship, fun, and purposefulness.

The students were concerned about maintaining a substance-free lifestyle and now have a focal point for organizing individual and group efforts. This student group promotes the idea that Indian youth have a fundamental right to achieve their own becoming—in body, mind and spirit—through the promotion of wholistic concepts.

The group has since helped develop similar groups for other school systems, such as Wind River, Wyoming; Cherokee, North Carolina; Sells, Parker, and Prescott, Arizona; and Winter Haven, California.

• In Oregon, the Governor has announced a statewide plan called the "Student Retention Initiative." Central to this initiative are partnerships that have been formed among the tribes, state and local agencies, organizations, and individuals. The goal is to keep young people in school or constructive alternatives. Local planning teams assess the needs of youth in each community and develop action plans to meet their needs. The state will provide technical assistance on model programs and funding strategies.

• At Alkali Lake, British Columbia, one of the most amazing and unheard of revivals from alcoholism occured in this small community of Shuswap Indians. The story began in 1971, when Ivy, seven-year-old daughter of Andy and Phyllis Chelsea, refused to leave with their parents saying, "You and Daddy drink too much."

The shock of Ivy's reaction convinced her mother than she must stop drinking. From then on, the road to sobriety for her mother, father, and eventually all except 12 of the 430 members of the community, changed their lifestyle. Their story is now available through a video documentary they produced entitled, "The Honour of All," which is being shown extensively throughout the United States. The Chelseas were on a panel at the health promotion conference in June to help the U.S. tribal communities by telling about their experience.

**CAN WE COUNT YOU IN?** American Indian and Alaska Native youth are counting on our attention, support, and energy. Let us join together to work for a strong and healthy future for them in the years to come.

Now is the time. Together we can mount a campaign that will really make a difference across Indian Country—on every reservation, in every town, city, and village. There is a role for everyone in YOUTH 2000.

We can motivate American Indian and Alaska Native youth to:

- believe in themselves;
- make the most of their potential;
- value a healthy mind and body; and,
- to become self-sufficient, productive members on their communities.

## INDIAN YOUTH NEED THE SUPPORT OF:

- Parents to seve as primary adult role models, counselors, and advocates for their children's well-being.

- Tribal leaders, Indian organizations, and state and local leaders to make at-risk youth a priority for their Tribes, organizations, and communities.

- Adult volunteers and peer role models to serve as mentors, positive role models, and tutors.

- Young Native people themselves to participate in understanding the problems facing them, in encouraging one another to make positive choices, and in developing solutions to problems that affect their daily lives.

- National and professional Indian organizations, voluntary and religious organizations, to incorporate YOUTH 2000 objectives into their activities and programs.

- Business and other private sector leaders to participate in local community planning efforts and to pledge training and job opportunities for their future employees.

## WHAT WILL SUPPORT INDIAN YOUTH 2000

Intensive Public Information Campaigns: Tribes and national organizations can identify at-risk youth and provide assistance to carry out intensive public awareness campaigns and locally tailored activities in support of YOUTH 2000 goals for Indian youth and their families.

National and Other Conferences: Tribes and national organizations interested in sponsoring YOUTH 2000 conferences and meetings to focus tribal leadership on youth issues, and on what can be done to address the problems of at-risk youth, can coordinate their agendas.

Partnerships: Partnerships can be established and expanded among federal agencies, foundations, and national Indian youth organizations to promote public and private sector support for American Indian and Alaska Native YOUTH 2000 across Indian Country.